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Identification

The Lovedu nation is here taken as synonymous with the "Lowveld Sotho" tribes of the Transvaal. All are of highly mixed origin. Though sometimes classed with the Venda group, their languages are "heavily Sothoized." The Kriges think the Lovedu proper may be of Kalanga origin, greatly mixed with and overlaid with Sotho, Venda, and recent Shangana-Tonga elements. The Lovedu are the source of Rider Haggard's novel "She." The tribes herewith classed as Lovedu in the broad sense (excluding many immigrant Shangana-Tonga) are the following:

a. Lovedu (Balovedu, Lobedu)--population over 40,000--politically dominant of diverse ethnic elements.
b. Narene (including Mahlo and Letswalo)--population c. 15,000.
c. Khaha--population c. 10,000.
d. Thabina (Moxoboya)--population c. 5,000.
e. Smaller tribes totaling roughly 10,000--Phalaborwa (Borwa), Sai (Shai, Tsubye), Mamidja (Baha Mamidja), Makxiba, etc.

The non-Lovedu tribes of this cluster are sometimes collectively classed as Laudi.

Basic Economy

Primarily agricultural, with maize as the staple. Eleusine is the oldest grain and the most encrusted with ritual. Kafir corn (Sorghum) and millet (Pennisetum typhoides) are important, as are pumpkins, beans, groundnuts, and sesame, and some peanuts (recent, in contrast to groundnuts), peas, and sweet potatoes are also grown. Though skill in animal husbandry is much inferior to that in agriculture, cattle and goats are numerous and important, but not for food, though both are milked. Cattle are crucial for marriage exchanges and goats for religious sacrifices, feasts, and hospitality. Sheep are few and unimportant. Chickens are numerous, but are a recent introduction from the Shangana-Tonga. Donkeys, used for plowing, were introduced 30 years ago, and pigs still more recently (pork is not eaten). Flesh but not eggs of chickens are eaten. Gathering is of considerable consequence, but hunting is unimportant. Fishing is not even mentioned in a full account of subsistence activities. There are no markets, and the Lovedu dislike barter and all commercial transactions.

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Sex Division of Labor

Cattle are herded by boys (formerly armed men). Men and boys milk. Cattle are not tabooed to women, though they have little to do with them. Gathering is done by girls. Both sexes have always participated in agriculture. Men alone clear land. Formerly both sexes hoed, weeded, and reaped, but today there is a strong tendency for men to plow and women to hoe. The cultivation of cereals is a joint task of both sexes, but other crops, especially groundnuts, are cultivated either exclusively or mainly by women.

Property

The chief form of wealth is cattle, owned by either sex, as private property; they are used exclusively in marriage transactions and are never bought or sold. Land cannot be bought and sold. It is alloted for use by district chiefs, not headmen.

Inheritance is patrilineal. The distribution is supervised by the ElSi and Br of the deceased. Sons are apparently favored over brothers.

Social Stratification

There is a royal stock or class, the Lovedu proper, constituting about ten per cent of the total population. Between the various ethnic groups in the population there are gradations in status, and marriage is not allowed with some of them, e.g., the Shangana-Tonga. This is specifically Lovedu, but doubtless pertains to other tribes as well. Apparently there is no slavery.

Marriage

A substantial bride-price is paid. There is no bargaining; its value and equivalences are traditionally fixed at about 8 cattle, 7 goats, some money, and a few trinkets. It is called munywalo. For marriage purposes, lineages or fractions thereof are arranged in a ring, reminiscent of the Trobriand kula; women move from group to group in a clockwise direction, cattle in a counter-clockwise direction. Basically the partners are "cattle-linked" brothers and sisters, for a bride-price for a woman secures a wife for her uterine brother. The preferred union, occurring in 60% of all cases, is with a MoBrDa. Obligations incurred

are transmitted within the patri-lineage. Special arrangements cover shortages of sons or daughters in the groups involved. If a married woman has more daughters than sons, the extra bride-price cattle are not used by her Hu to finance marriages of sons by other wives but are given by the Wi to her own MoBr as an investment to provide a wife for a son of her daughter. These and other arrangements and kin obligations take care of marriages for surplus sons. Princesses as well as common women are married by a bride-price. Even a woman can secure "wives" in this way, buying a daughter from her cattle-linked brother as the wife of a non-existent son--actually her own "wife" though called "daughter-in-law."

Polygyny is preferential and is practiced by about one-third of the men. Each wife has her independent household. The chief wife is the MoBrDa. Though non-sororal polygyny occurs commonly, the sororal form is preferred. Custom requires a Hu to treat all his wives with the most rigorous impartiality. He is subject to nagging if he spends even a little more time with one than another, and if he gives one a gift or some extra attention he must do exactly the same for the others. This competitive situation gives polygynous wives considerably more influence than polygynous ones [among monogamous Christian Lovedu the status of women has fallen].

Family

The polygynous family rather than an extended family is the norm.

Residence

The patrilocal rule appears to be universal.

Kin Groups and Exogamy

Local exogamy is the rule.

There are corporate exogamous patri-lineages, each with a territorial organization. It is within them that kinship terminology is used. They are aggregated into non-exogamous patrilineal sub-sibs and sibs, which are definitely unilinear descent groups but not corporate bodies. Sibs are aggregated into non-patrilineal "divisions" of common historical origin (e.g., the Mamavolo Pigs and the Lovedu Pigs), and these are aggregated into larger "clusters" or name-groups, which may or may

not have totemic taboos in common. These clusters are often of diverse ethnic origin, e.g., Kalanga, Venda, Pedi, Shangana-Tonga, Tlokwa, Nyai, Mamavolo, and Lemba. The clusters may bear animal names (e.g., Crocodiles, Lions, Pigs, Wild Dogs, Porcupines, Goats) or tribal designations (e.g., Venda, Lemba, Koni, Kalanga, Manyika, Shangana-Tonga). Among the latter are the Lovedu cluster (the royal stock) and several other clusters related to it as "brothers" or "maternal uncles." Khaha sibs are exogamous.

There are no bilineal kin groups and apparently no kindreds. Marriage is allowed with any cross-cousin, preferred with MoBrDa, forbidden with parallel cousin.

Kinship Terminology

Fa--bopape. Mo--mma. Ch--ngwana. Hu--monna. Wi--mosadi. Avuncular terminology is bifurcate collateral; also nepotic terms. Cousin terms are of Iroquois type.

Settlement Pattern

There are settled communities, but individual settlements are very small, really hamlets of 5-15 huts on the average. The real community is a cluster of hamlets with a single headman. Huts are round in ground plan with conical thatched roofs. They are arranged in a circle or in two incomplete semicircles. There is a special hut for boys and unmarried men.

Community Organization

Socially the cluster of hamlets is a patrilocal clan-community. There are age-sets for each sex but no formal age-grades.

Local Government

Each hamlet has its head--a sub-lineage headman. The senior among such heads is the headman of the community--the "district chief." Succession is patrilineal to these offices, but the precise manner is not specified.

State

The nation, which numbers about 50,000 people occupying about 5,000 square miles (a large proportion of alien ethnic stock), is divided

into 70 "districts"--mostly really communities, some exclusively of alien stock. The organization is territorial, the "district chiefs" paying tribute to the paramount chief or monarch in women, who are distributed among the monarch's confidential advisers (relatives and important district chiefs residing in the capital city). The monarch, among the Lovedu always a queen since about 1800, is the mother-in-law of all district chiefs through their daughters given as "tributary wives." The queen is a divine monarch--essentially a rain-maker. In theory the Lovedu queen must have no blemish, and must commit suicide by poison before she becomes unfit to rule (the last queen to die, the second in a series of 3 over 140 years--committed suicide thus in 1894). Before the event she calls a small council of very close relatives to choose a successor. The queen's death is not announced for a year; then there is a new-fire ceremony; then all claimants to the throne pass before and knock on the door of the house where she died; the one for whom the door is opened is the next ruler. There is no fixed rule of succession for the Lovedu proper. The queen bears children but has no legitimate husband; she does, however, have "wives," and apparently the successor is normally the child of one of them.

Warfare

Inferentially the Lovedu are a peaceful people.

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